



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet Georgia 2021



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2020 Final
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$944,315
Forest Legacy	\$4,121,000
Forest Stewardship	\$313,740
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$250,030
State Fire Assistance	\$1,486,564
Urban and Community Forestry	\$627,218
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$344,986
Total	\$8,087,853

NOTE: This funding is for all entities within the state, not just the State Forester's office.

The cooperative programs are administered and implemented through a partnership among the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC), the USDA Forest Service, and many other private and government entities. These programs promote the health and productivity of forestlands and rural economies. Emphasis focuses on forest sustainability and the production of commodity and amenity values such as wildlife, water quality, and environmental services.

Program Goals

- The overarching goal is to maintain and improve the health of urban and rural forests and related economies as well as to protect the forests and citizens of the state. These programs maximize cost effectiveness through the use of partnerships in program delivery, increase forestland value and sustainability, and do so in a voluntary and non-regulatory manner.

Key Issues

- One of the main issues during FY 20 revolved around our response to the Covid-19 outbreak. The focus was on the safety of our citizens and employees, while continuing to provide services and meet program goals. Each department within the agency crafted a plan to continue to function, while minimizing risks. For example, the forest management department staff is teleworking exclusively but continuing to make land visits, practicing social distancing if landowners or others are present.
- According to the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment, Georgia has 11,768 communities at risk of wildland fire of which 5,066, or 43%, are rated at high or very high risk from wildfires. Twenty-five percent of Georgia's landscape, or 9 million acres, is categorized as Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). In FY20, there were 16 homes lost or heavily damaged by wildfire in Georgia with another 1,086 saved by direct suppression actions by the GFC.
- The GFC is continuing to take an active leadership role in southeast U.S. water resource issues including working closely with multiple partners such as the US Endowment for Forests and Communities, the Southeastern Partnership for Forests and Water, the Longleaf Alliance (LLA), the Savannah River Clean Water Fund (SRCWF), the University of GA (UGA), and many others to make the connection between water resources, such as drinking water, and healthy working forests.
- Each year, Georgia's timberlands grow 48% more wood than is utilized. Over supply of stumpage, particularly pine saw timber, highlights the need for new markets for forest products from private lands.
- With the continuing change in demographics in the southeast, GFC recognizes the need for increased outreach efforts targeting forest landowners and more general audiences. Efforts continue to increase use of social media and traditional media to distribute messages for water quality and working forests, forest health issues, urban forestry and reforestation needs.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2020 Accomplishments	Value
Population	9,687,653	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	98,953
Acres of Forest Land	24,464,219	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	73,626
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	18,172,000	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	0
Number of NIPF Landowners	524,000	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	25
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	1,400,000	State Fire Communities Assisted	75
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	27,300,000	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	9,347
Number of Rural Fire Departments	469	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Cities and Towns	533	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	264
Forest Based Employment	55,562	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	7,046,515
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	1	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	93,200
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	55,333,160		

Program Highlights**Cooperative Fire Protection**

There were 2,552 wildfires that burned over 9,488 acres of private forestland during FY20. State Fire Assistance provided for the safety of Georgia's citizens by assuring they were protected from the threat of wildfires. Due to COVID-19 public health concerns in FFY20 and the internal actions taken by the Forest Protection Department to prevent the spread of the coronavirus some program accomplishments had a notable reduction. In addition, there were delays and postponements of both wildland fire suppression and prescribed fire training sessions. GFC enforcement personnel investigated 43 wildfires resulting in 16 criminal charges. The GFC serviced 3,316 requests and installed 20,119 miles of pre-suppression firebreaks during the year. There were 1,014,952 total acres that received prescribed burning during the year, with the GFC providing direct assistance on 52,421 acres. The GFC conducted two (2) Prescribed Fire Manager Certification training sessions with 92 participants in attendance. We have initiated Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) in 143 counties and have completed 141 CWPPs to date. There are 112 Firewise, USA national recognitions for GA in FY20. The Federal Excess Personal Property Program assists Georgia in acquiring and placing fire equipment in rural communities throughout the state. Through the Federal DOD Firefighter Program, in FY20 the GFC acquired 78 individual pieces of equipment to support both GFC, local counties, and fire and emergency service agencies with a combined asset value of over \$3.1 million. In addition, the GFC administers Volunteer Fire Assistance Program funds to support the fire prevention and protection efforts of rural community fire departments. Through national and regional coordination, the GFC was able to provide National Wildland fire response by filling 70 individual personnel resource orders on 6 out of state wildfire incidents.

Economic Action

Georgia's forest industry contributed \$36.5 billion in revenue output and 141,214 jobs with compensation of \$8.6 billion. Maintaining the forest industry's status as one of the top economic drivers in the state is critical, particularly for rural communities. Georgia's forest industry would not exist without the state's highly productive and sustainable forests. The state's forests have excess utilization capacity for existing industry expansion or for new forest industries. New markets and demand for this large excess wood supply will help forest owners keep their forests as forests and not converting them to non-forest uses. GFC forest utilization and marketing provides forest resource analyses for existing industries seeking to expand operations, new industrial prospects, forest owners, business consultants, and state and local economic developers. U&M staff provided assistance to six projects.

Establishing New Forest Products and Values

GFC champions market growth of all forest industry sectors through existing and new product research,

development and technology transfer that may lead to new income streams for forest owners including sequestered carbon and other ecosystem service valuations, forest planning and financial analyses. U&M staff provided (2) forest planning and financial analyses assists using Simulator for Managed Stands (SIMS) growth and yield modeling to educate forest owners on improving economic outcomes from various forest management scenarios. Staff provided (24) technical advice/reports on carbon sequestration, carbon markets, Georgia's Carbon Sequestration Registry and other ecosystem services that may lead to new values realized from forests. Staff attended scores of virtual technical conferences on timber supply forecasting, mass timber, forest industry logistics, and financial analyses and delivered this information through outreach/education efforts to customers, company prospects, and the general public via various media. Staff collaborated with several NGO's, state, regional and national organizations to advance the development of a new forest product in Georgia, cross-laminated timber (CLT). Staff maintains, monitors and collects growth data on (2) seven-year-old, biomass reforestation demonstration plots, located on the Bartram and Dixon state forests, which may result in new forest biomass silvicultural prescriptions and potentially new income streams from forest biomass. Staff continued research on four, multi-year and multi-state projects including construction sector wood usage, forestry sector economic impact modeling, urban forest wood utilization and projections on timber harvest and wood supplies.

Forest Diseases

Five major diseases are monitored and managed across Georgia: Heterobasidion root disease (formerly annosus root disease), sugarberry dieback and mortality, thousand cankers disease, sudden oak death, and laurel wilt disease. Heterobasidion root disease monitoring began in 2005 with mortality in recently thinned pine plantations (slash and loblolly). Over the past decade, most commercial treatment options have been withdrawn, leaving Cellu- Treat® as the only control for this root disease. In October 2016, the labeling of Phlebiopsis gigantea for Heterobasidion root disease was accomplished to provide an additional tool for control of this disease. Sugarberry dieback and mortality in sugarberry (*Celtis laevigata*) was reported in the Columbia, South Carolina area in 2009. In September 2015 sugarberry dieback and mortality spread to the Augusta Country Club Golf Course in Augusta, Georgia, and in July 2019, the disease was observed as a widespread problem in Savannah, Georgia. In August 2019, a partnership was formed with USDA Forest Service, National Park Service, the University of Georgia, the Georgia Forestry Commission, Tybee Island, and the City of Savannah. This cooperative partnership continues to work together to isolate the pathogen and vector of this new disease. Annual surveys continue to be conducted to detect thousand cankers disease and sudden oak death. No suspected sudden oak death samples have been collected since 2013 and thousand cankers disease has not been detected in Georgia. Laurel wilt disease is now confirmed in 74 counties in Georgia, infesting approximately 12 million acres. In 2020, positive detections were made in sassafras in Calhoun, Cherokee, Clay, Cobb, Quitman, Randolph, Stewart, Terrell and Webster Counties.

Forest Health Protection

In 2020, GFC foresters incorporated insect, disease or invasive species advice in 346 management cases involving 22,483 acres. Each Stewardship and Tree Farm plan written in GA incorporates advice to landowners concerning forest health issues. Statewide, forest health personnel provided training to 31,600 GA citizens during 39 training sessions. Annually, prediction traps are set statewide to provide early detection of destructive forest insects, and provide information to produce an active response to the threat. Diligent efforts are made to detect the following destructive forest insects in GA: southern pine beetle, ips engraver beetle, emerald ash borer, Asian gypsy moth, redbay ambrosia beetle, walnut twig borer, Tremex and Sirex wood borers, and any new first introduction pest that is found in the United States. In 2020, 37 southern pine beetle infestations were detected with a total loss of 67 acres of mature pine timber. Aerial forest health surveys were severely restricted in 2020 due to COVID-19, and only two short flights were made and found 1 small (1/4 acre) ips engraver beetle spot. Annual early detection/rapid response surveys were also conducted to identify non-native forest pests entering the US through international commerce. One European gypsy moth was caught in 2020 at the campground on Jekyll Island. The Invasive Plant Control Program continued, assisting landowners with control of targeted invasive plant species. In 2020, 21 contracts were completed on 1,128 acres. Ninety-five new cogongrass infestation sites were reported and treated by the GFC during 2020. Sixty-nine GA counties have now identified cogongrass infestations involving 1,446 sites across 368 acres. Only 184 infestations remain active in GA and those active spots have been treated with herbicides at least once.

Forest Inventory and Analysis

During FY 2020, Georgia's FIA Foresters collected data on a total of 1,120 plots. Of these, 87 plots were

National Forest Plots (mostly in the mountainous northern region of Georgia) with downed woody debris data collection added. Downed woody debris collection is added to all plots in and surrounding the National Forest to build fuel models and also for total carbon counts (which includes dead and down vegetation). Sixty-two of the plots were P2-Plus Plots that have added crown variables to each tree, downed woody debris on each subplot, and vegetative profiles collected on each subplot. We also completed 123 Hurricane Michael special study plots that had downed woody material data collection added to account for the trees laying on the ground. A percentage of the completed plots were checked for accuracy and the average accuracy for Georgia's FIA foresters was an excellent 97% for the fiscal year. GFC data collection productivity remained relatively high this year due to receiving full FIA funding again from the USFS, which allows us to keep the 12 FIA Foresters we need. We met our 5-year cycle plot goals this fiscal year despite Covid shutdowns (2 months of one-person crews). Full funding is the key factor in Georgia meeting our productivity goals.

Forest Legacy

Georgia did not submit an application for the FY20 cycle.

Forest Stewardship

In order to maintain an acceptable level of production, GFC continued the incentive program for plan writers. This program was developed to create a mechanism to get GFC employees to produce additional management plans at a reduced cost over conventional contracting. Currently, the cumulative enrollment for active landowners is 2434 plans covering 757,788 acres in Georgia. In FY20, 239 plans for 77,395 acres were written. The Georgia program has continued to develop partnerships with conservation organizations like the National Tree Farm System and the National Fish & Wildlife Federation to broaden outreach efforts. New partnerships to reach under-served groups like HEIRS property owners are being developed with groups like the McIntosh Seed, Coastal Regional Commission, and the HEIRS Law Center partnership. This effort delivers focused technical information delivery to landowners who have been challenged with clear title issues. Other underserved landowner outreach programs include UGA's Women's workshops, Law center's HEIRS Workshop, CRC's Undeserved Property Owner Survey, & UGS's Serving Underserved Family Forest Landowners. GFC has continued sponsoring a series of workshops that continue into 2021 FY. Other outreach efforts include a Stewardship Series Pod Cast. Through its Certified Steward designation, the FSP continues to recognize landowners who demonstrate commitment to forest stewardship of their land. Nine new stewards were nominated in FY20. New partnerships are being developed in an effort to broaden outreach by hosting several landowner seminars. These partnerships include SE Georgia Altamaha Partnership, the Feral Swine Initiative, the West Central GA Landowner initiative, and Chattahoochee Fall Partnership. GFC through the Stewardship Program is also supporting the Short Leaf Initiative by provide Cost Share in NW GA counties and by providing additional funding to produce Containerized Short Leaf Pines at the Flint Nursery.

Landowner Assistance

In FY20, GFC foresters completed a total of 8001 cases/site visits covering 647547 acres. Verbal advice was given during most visits and followed up with a written plan to the landowner and other documentation such as maps, pamphlets, directories, etc. Over half of the cases and acres served were associated with the planning and certifying practices for incentive programs, such as EFRP, CRP, SPB, EQIP, IPSC and CSP. Foresters were also very active in the Forest Debris Management Program, funded by the Georgia General Assembly, to clean up storm debris resulting from Hurricane Michael. During FY20, GFC foresters certified the performance of 431 FDMP contracts, completing 77,948 acres of debris clean-up. The following is a breakdown of the cases completed.

General Advice: 1334 cases, 159,920 acres

BMP Assurance Exam: 125 cases

BMP Firebreak Inspection: 743 cases, 1,113 miles

BMP Survey Site Visits: 60 cases

EFRP: 231 cases, 62,991 acres

CRP: 951 cases, 40,133 acres

SPB: 358 cases, 32,713 acres

EQIP: 2504 cases, 171,684 acres

IPSC: 116 cases, 3,096 acres

Tree Farm: 18 cases, 15,424 acres

CSP: 19 cases, 5,053 acres

State Lands Cases: 18
 FDMP: 432 cases, 78,047 acres
 FSP completed/renewed: 239 cases, 77,295 acres
 FSP certified: 9 cases, 1,188 acres
 Cogongrass site visits: 844
 Totals: 8001 cases, 647,547 acres, 1,113 miles

Marketing and Technical Assistance

GFC U&M staff markets and promotes the state's forest resources through print and online media and public speaking venues; forest industry surveys and economic impact reports; and by cultivating new customers at domestic and international trade shows. Staff initiated the 2019 Timber Product Output Survey in cooperation with the project lead, USFS SRS, completing (31) surveys of primary wood-using industries. Technical advice and marketing services totaled (544) including disseminating domestic and international trade leads to potential buyers and exporters, cultivated via memberships with the SFPA, AHEC and HSEG. Formal presentations were provided to (8) groups. Staff attended/displayed marketing exhibits at (6) domestic and (1) international trade shows.

Urban and Community Forestry

In FY20, Georgia had 155 Tree City USA communities, 22 Tree Campus USA schools and 1 Tree Line USA utility. Funds from the Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Assistance program were used to contract with the Georgia Tree Council (GTC) to utilize circuit-rider arborists to assist communities in developing community forestry programs. Approximately 213 educational programs, meetings or trainings were conducted by U&CF staff and circuit rider arborists. Most of these events took place before the start of pandemic. Once COVID-19 protocols were put in place, meeting with communities or trainings were cancelled, severely restricted, or moved to a virtual platform if possible. Circuit riders & U&CF staff were able to conduct two Certified Arborist Review classes during the year. These classes trained 30 individuals. The City of Macon hosted the statewide Arbor Day celebration in February 2020 focusing on the basics of tree care. U&CF funding was also used to provide 10,000 seedlings to 36 Keep Georgia Beautiful affiliates to distribute at their "Bring One for the Chipper" events. In addition, U&CF funding was used to support the GTC which conducted three quarterly programs, a College Canopy Conference and the Annual Awards Luncheon & Conference. U&CF funding was also used to support the Georgia Arborist Association, in addition to a project studying the feasibility of licensing for tree care companies. One intern from UGA was hired in November to assist with the Tree City USA program and other projects virtually. Using supplemental funding from the USFS to assist with Hurricane Michael recovery, SCFP hired a Community Forester to focus on helping communities impacted by the 2018 disaster. With this funding, SCFP was also able to offer grants to communities and organizations in southwest GA for tree planting and giveaway projects which will help to restore the tree canopy lost during Hurricane Michael.

Water Quality

The GFC Water Quality program is funded partly through the EPA Section 319 grant. During the FFY2020 reporting period (October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020), the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) conducted regular statewide BMP Assurance Monitoring of active or recently active forestry operations. GFC also provided education/advice/training/consultation on forestry BMPs. GFC staff completed a total of 124 site inspections and BMP Assurance Exams. GFC completed and recorded 46 BMP Survey Inspections to finish up the overall 2019 Forestry BMP Survey, adding to the total of 254 BMP Survey Inspections done during calendar year 2019. GFC completed the Results Report for the 2019 BMP Survey and provided the full report to GA-EPD. GFC started planning for the 2021 Forestry BMP Survey. Collection of sites was planned over the next several months. At this early stage as of the end of September 2020, only 14 actual survey site inspections have been completed for the 2021 survey. Survey inspections will continue through 2021. GFC staff participated in 146 public events for 3466 cumulative attendees and 84 other meetings with various groups, such as federal/state/local government, NGOs, landowners, forest industry, loggers, timber buyers, foresters, contractors, academics, general public, etc. GFC staff performed 12 Field Demonstrations of BMPs for 84 participants. GFC staff also conducted 134 primary specific forestry BMP Advice Visits for at least 89 people on a total of about 23668 acres. GFC foresters completed 170 Firebreak BMP Inspections on GFC installed firebreaks, provided 34 one-to-one Logger Conferences, and hosted 35 one-to-one and/or group GFC Forester/Ranger Trainings including Master Timber Harvester Training and Trainings on BMPs for new employees as part of our online GFC Fire Academy. During FFY2020, GFC distributed at least 614 copies of BMP brochures at 24 BMP events.

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